

WASHINGTON DC - Monday, November 19, 2012, Rep Mike Honda published the following op-ed on immigration reform in [The Hill](#) :

Bipartisan deal possible on immigration reform

By Rep. Michael Honda (D-Calif.)

In the wake of the election, House Speaker John Boehner says he is confident that Congress and the White House can work together to enact a comprehensive approach to fix our broken immigration system. Senators Charles Schumer and Lindsay Graham have started working together on a bipartisan, immigration bill. If Speaker Boehner and Republican House Members are willing to fix our immigration system with urgency, my Democratic colleagues and I are ready and willing to work with them.

President Barack Obama's re-election and the record turn-out by Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Latino voters demonstrate the nation's support for comprehensive immigration reform. Sixty-five percent of all voters support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, according to the CNN National Exit Poll.

The overwhelming AAPI and Latino support for President Obama illustrates the demand for prioritizing immigration reform. Family reunification, to begin with, is a huge concern for AAPI and Latino communities. There are currently 4.55 million people in the family immigration backlog, nearly half of which, or 1.96 million, are Asian and Pacific Islanders. While AAPIs consist of 6 percent of the US population, they sponsor nearly one-third of all family-based immigrants. For the first time ever, the influx of Asians moving to the U.S. has surpassed that of Hispanics. Backlogs plague our immigration system, and people wait decades to reunite with their families.

On average, AAPIs wait 23 years to reunite with loved ones in the U.S. To address this issue, I introduced the Reuniting Families Act, legislation that reduces the backlog of families trying to reunite with their loved ones by classifying lawful permanent resident spouses, including LGBT partners and children, as 'immediate relatives'. In addition to unjust family separation, our broken immigration system does not extend immigrant rights to same-sex partners, and LGBT families are left out of the immigration system.

The LGBT community's triumph on Tuesday represents progress for immigrant rights. The electorate in Maine, Maryland, and Washington State passed marriage-equality measures, and Minnesota voters defeated a ballot measure against same-sex marriage. Wisconsin elected Tammy Baldwin, the first openly gay person to the U.S. Senate, and the nation re-elected Barack Obama, the first President to ever support marriage-equality. As we move forward to

advance LGBT rights, including overturning the Defense of Marriage Act, we must illuminate the realities of same-sex, immigrant partnerships. No one should have to choose between their spouse and their country, and U.S. citizens should not be separated from their loved ones.

The comprehensive and inclusive Reuniting Families Act will ensure that same sex-partners and families are treated equitably in the immigration system. When we recognize the intersections in the experiences and struggles of immigrant and LGBT communities, we can work together to oppose repressive legislation, fix systems, and support policies that protect rights and promote inclusivity. In this election, immigrant youth activists, immigrant communities, advocates, and the electorate brought immigration reform to the forefront of the legislative agenda.

Our nation was built upon the toil of immigrants hoping to build better lives for themselves and their families, and immigrants continue to make profound contributions to our economy and social fabric. That is why we need a comprehensive solution that provides an adequate number of family-based visas per year and expands employment-based visa categories that grant foreign students with advanced US university degrees in science and engineering a path to citizenship.

As a nation, we must continue moving forward in a collective fight for immigration reform that values the contributions of immigrants and honors the American Dream. Civic participation did not start and end on Nov. 6th, and voters must hold their elected officials accountable. Congress must collaborate and forge comprehensive and humane immigration reform. As Immigration Taskforce Chair of the Congressional Asian and Pacific American Caucus, I will continue to advocate for immigration reform, and I am committed to reaching across the aisle. We all agree that that reform is overdue. Now is the time to work together.

Honda represents Silicon Valley and serves on the House Budget and Appropriations committees.